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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MCNS MEETS TO APPROVE MILITIA ACTION PLAN

REF: A. BAGHDAD 981
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1022

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission David Satterfield for reasons 1.
4 (b) AND (d).

[1](#)1. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: On April 3, Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari convened a meeting of the Ministerial Committee for National Security (MCNS) to discuss further the "Prime Minister's Plan to Manage the Issue of Armed Groups in Baghdad" that was approved initially on March 26 (reftel B). Following the plan's approval, Ja'afari had directed National Security Advisor Dr. Mowwafak al-Rubaie to work with MNF-I to draft an action plan that would enumerate concrete steps to put the plan into effect. The members present at the April 3 meeting discussed and approved Rubaie's plan. The action plan:

- requires that political leaders of armed groups be contacted and told of the government's position on armed groups in order to avoid misperceptions;
- directs that the government work with foreign neighbors and donor nations to (1) seek assistance in stemming the flow of support for armed groups and (2) request financial assistance for the funding of a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program;
- launches a media campaign highlighting the government's role in promoting the rule of law and in providing security to the public;
- continues Operation Scales of Justice, which includes increased uniformed patrols in Baghdad and actions targeting terrorist concentrations in the Baghdad area; and
- takes several other measures to discourage the activities of armed groups in Baghdad.

The plan focuses on political engagement and non-confrontational tactics, but it grudgingly recognizes the need for Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to take tougher action when confronted by elements of armed groups that do not embrace this plan. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S//REL GBR AUS) PM Ja'afari held a meeting of the MCNS at his residence on April 3. Attendees included Ja'afari, Rubaie, Minister of Defense Saadoun al-Dulime, MNF-I Commanding General Casey, and British Ambassador Patey. Embassy was represented by Acting PolMilCouns. Also present were MNF-I Deputy Commanding General Fry as well as Ja'afari's Chief of Staff and Military Advisor. The Minister of Interior and Minister of State for National Security Affairs were not present.

FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT

13. (S//REL GBR AUS) Ja'afari said the plan is based on the following principles: Iraq has a democratic government, and there is no justification for militias in a democracy; the ISF are the protectors of the law, not the militias that promote putting arms in the hands of people spreading disorder; educating the people that they must lay down their arms and trust in their political leaders is key; and political leaders must stress that the need for militias will diminish with the development of the political process. Ja'afari's plan is to engage the political leaders of armed groups. If those leaders fail to accept the offer, then they will be deemed to be operating outside of the law, and the law must be brought to bear on them.

14. (S//REL GBR AUS) The focus of the plan is therefore primarily on engagement, rather than confrontation. No specific group is mentioned, and the term "militia" does not appear. The plan's five steps closely match those reported in refTel B (when the plan was initially approved). There have been several minor adjustments. Step One of the plan is to write to the political leaders associated with armed groups including: the signatories to CPA Order 91, the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), Tawaffuq, the Muslim Ulama Council, and any other group that the Prime Minister agrees upon. (COMMENT: Tawaffuq and the Ulama Council are Sunni Arab organizations, but they have no formal associations with armed groups. This contrasts with the Office of the Martyr Sadr and the Jaysh al-Mahdi, for example. END COMMENT.) The letter to the leaders will highlight the government's commitment to national unity, recognize the contributions the groups have made in the past, express understanding for the motivations of each group, ask for each group's agreement to recognize the rule of law enforced by the ISF, and disclose that the government intends to provide employment opportunities for former armed group members. The plan includes a "government engagement plan" that sets forth who is responsible for reaching out to which group, as well as a matrix indicating the message that is to be emphasized to each of the groups.

15. (S//REL GBR AUS) Step Two of the plan is to work with neighboring countries to discourage continued support for armed groups within Iraq. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is assigned the lead on this project. In addition, donor and allied nations are to be approached with requests for support and funding for a long-term DDR program that will follow this initial outreach to armed groups.

16. (S//REL GBR AUS) Step Three is the "positive" media campaign. The emphasis will not be on the harm caused by armed groups. Rather, it will focus on the importance of promoting the rule of law and of allowing ISF to assure security. In addition, the campaign will call for the cooperation and support of the people and political parties and will announce the intention of the government to provide opportunities for "those who have suffered injustice and negligence in the past."

CONCRETE MEASURES

17. (S//REL GBR AUS) There are steps in the plan that acknowledge the need for concrete action by MNF-I and ISF. Step Four calls for the continuation of the already commenced "Operation Scales of Justice," which increases the number of uniformed patrols in Baghdad and includes focused raids on areas in the vicinity of Baghdad that shelter terrorists. One of the intended effects of the operation is to bolster the public's confidence in the ISF by permitting the ISF to have a more visible presence. It also is hoped that this increased presence will drive down the number of armed men in the streets and at makeshift checkpoints.

18. (S//REL GBR AUS) The measures listed in Step Five will

include the replacement of armed group checkpoints with ISF checkpoints. This will be done with the cooperation of the political leadership of the groups in question. In addition, patrols by armed groups will be prohibited, as will all displays of weapons and visible propaganda that support armed groups. Step Five also includes a subsection, inserted by the Iraqis, to emphasize the need for MNF-I to coordinate with regard to any operations.

COMMENT

19. (S//REL GBR AUS) COMMENT: Ja'afari's approach to dealing with militias in Baghdad is to: first, avoid the appearance of targeting a specific group or militia (e.g., JAM); second, seek to engage the political leadership of all armed groups, not just those already recognized by CPA Order 91 (another nod to JAM, which is not part of CPA 91); and third, hope that the groups that are causing problems in Baghdad (mainly JAM) will cooperate by peacefully withdrawing and permitting ISF to exercise jurisdiction in the city. Ja'afari simply cannot permit himself to be seen as taking any action that threatens JAM or its leader, Moqtada al-Sadr. Ja'afari even went so far as to seek agreement that the plan's existence not be publicized to the media. The outreach and media campaigns are slated to start immediately while the "execution stage" will begin toward the middle of the month. The test will be whether the political leaders who Ja'afari is counting on (mainly Sadr) decide to play ball, and also whether some of the more independently-minded militia lieutenants agree to follow their lead. If not, confrontations will occur, and Ja'afari (if he's still Prime Minister) will be forced to make some very difficult decisions. In the meantime, Embassy and MNF-I continue to work together to formulate a more strategic plan on how to address the long-term challenges posed by extragovernmental armed groups. END COMMENT.
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